

SOURCES OF LOVE AND HATE

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Occasionally, the child's guilt and dread about the masturbatory act and the phantasies which it expresses are so great that he cannot deal with it himself, and does need the help of real external control. On p. 148, I quote a case of this type. Not knowing the earlier history of this case, it is impossible to say whether the excessive anxiety arises from something in the child's constitution, or whether, in spite of the nurse's statement that the child has never been scolded or punished for the act, she nevertheless has been acted upon too strongly in some indirect way by those in her environment. One thing is certain about such a child, namely, that she is in desperate need of psycho-analytic treatment and that nothing short of this will effect a cure, since she has to lean so heavily upon outside control that cannot be continued in later life, from the nature of the case.

Bridges seems to suggest in the quoted passage (p. 154) that children play with their own genitals *because* they have diffuse attention, or indefinite or limited interests. Cause and effect, however, lie in great measure in the reverse direction. They have few or scattered interests largely because so much of their psychic energy is locked up in deep internal conflict, itself expressed in the masturbation.

She further points out that as the children's interest in the activities provided in the school and their play with other children develop, the masturbation disappears. This is happily true, whether in home or school, except in the case of children who are too severely embroiled in internal conflict. The good nursery school is able to wean the ordinary child from playing with his genitals not only through the material and opportunity for other forms of pleasurable activity in

which the infantile sexual impulses can find an indirect outlet (play with sand and water and plasticine, the building of big towers, dramatic expression, etc.), but largely through the atmosphere of security and affection which the adult provides, and the permission which she, acting as a mild external super-ego, offers to the child to be active in directions which have for him these unconscious sexual significances.

The personal relation of the child to the teacher, as well as to other children, and the discovery that safe and satisfactory outlets for both sexual and aggressive impulses are provided and encouraged, enable the child to face outwards in the life of the emotions instead of seeking satisfaction and power